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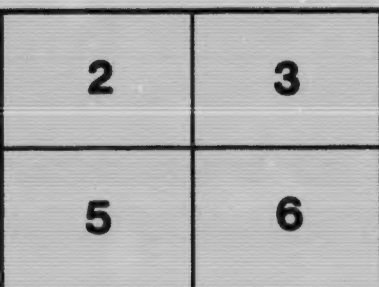
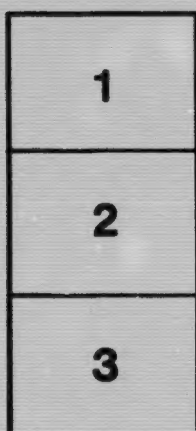
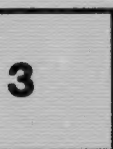
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Prohibition Endorsed

BY THE
BISHOP OF FREDERICTON.

*The following is an Extract from Bishop Richardson's Charge to the
Diocesan Synod held in Fredericton, February 1, 1916.*

I desire to take this formal opportunity of speaking to the Church people of the Province upon the subject of temperance. It is not the first time that I have done so in this way, nor, if I am spared, is it likely to be the last. It seems to me, however, that the time has come for a more definite and distinct pronouncement upon a subject of such supreme importance to the moral and economic well-being of the world. As you are all aware, it has been officially announced that the Provincial Government will bring in at the approaching session of the Legislature a bill for the entire suppression of the liquor traffic in New Brunswick. No details have yet been given to the public, but it is assumed that the people of the Province will be given the opportunity to express their judgment in the matter through the medium of a referendum. It seems likely, therefore, that the responsibility will be laid upon us of saying whether or no the traffic in intoxicating liquor shall continue in the Province. It is with this in mind that I speak to you this afternoon.

I do not think that I need try to prove to you the economic and moral evil wrought by intoxicating liquor. It is everywhere apparent in the world. More and more men are coming to see that no single thing is fraught with consequences of such tremendous import in that respect. The past twenty years have been years of progress in regard to the use of intoxicating liquor. Old prejudices, some of them as foolish as they were old,—have been swept away by the tide of education, and everywhere the conclusion is being reached that the use of strong drink as a beverage is not only not helpful to the human constitution, but, on the contrary, is positively harmful. If proof be demanded for that assertion—and at this late day, it is almost preposterous to ask for proof—it will be found in a quarter free from even the faintest suspicion of prejudice—in the uncompromising antagonism to the use of liquor upon the part of almost every great business corporation, and even set forth in the actuarial tables of all the leading life insurance companies. This witness is indeed a weighty one. For if those whose primary concern—almost might one say whose sole concern—is not with the morals of the men whom they employ, but with the relative productivity of labour under varying conditions, and whose judgment in the matter, therefore, is purely economic, are thus emphatic in their condemnation of even moderate drinking; and if, once more,

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those whose business it is, under expert guidance, to weigh and calculate the probabilities of life with a view to paying dividends, are of the same unanimous opinion, then the question as to the wisdom or unwisdom of the habit in this respect can hardly be considered as even open for discussion. Its condemnation has passed into the region of economic postulates.

One remembers in this connection the extraordinary revulsion of feeling that has swept across Europe, and, one might almost add, the world, since the outbreak of the war. It has been absolutely startling in its suddenness. Russia, France, England, each alike has seen in the use of intoxicating liquor a menace to the strength and safety of the State more deadly than any Teuton terror, and each in its own way has taken the most unprecedented measures to meet the danger. It will be said, I know, that this revulsion of feeling is the outcome only of the exceptional circumstances in which these warring nations find themselves to-day. That is no doubt true, but it is precisely under such exceptional circumstances that the eyes of men are opened to see things as they really are, and not as they seem to be. It may be confidently affirmed, indeed, that one of the great gains that will come to the world out of all the evil of this hateful war will be a re-adjustment of moral and economic values in the minds of men, a clearer apprehension as to what are the first and most important things of all. Such a re-adjustment indeed, is already going on in the lives of many men, and not least, perhaps, in regard to the use of strong drink. Multitudes of men are learning to their great surprise that they can do without it to their own advantage, and to the advantage of the State. The witness of the war to the economic evil of the traffic in intoxicating liquor is as clear and convincing as anything could be, and we do well to heed it.

No war was needed to prove that the effects of the liquor habit are morally disastrous, and I need hardly take time to speak of that to the members of this Synod. Whatever room there may be for difference of opinion as the method by which this evil must be met, there is no room for difference of opinion as to the fact that it is an evil. It is enough to think of what we have all seen and known within our own experience. It is enough to remember the tragedies that are everywhere and always associated with the habit of intemperance—the ruined and broken lives, the wrecked and shattered homes, the forlorn and weeping women, the desolate and forsaken children. Is there anywhere a parish in which these things are not seen? Is there anywhere a city, or a town, or a village, that does not know them? It is my habit, as many of you know, to spend several weeks in each year in the conduct of parochial missions. I have been doing that for nine years and more, and I have never brought a mission to a close without a deepened impression of the destructive way in which the devil works through the agency of strong drink. It is dreadful to see the way in which, when the veneer of conventional religion is stripped away, this hydra-headed horror shows itself. Beneath the fair surface of the seemingly respectable religious life it is lurking all the time. It is terribly

significant that a large percentage of the requests for special prayer that come in at such a time have to do with men, who have fallen victims to the tyranny of strong drink. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that it is the greatest instrument for moral evil in the world — more insidious in its power of self-disguise, more subtle in its workings, and more destructive in its dreadful ends, than any other single moral evil.

There can be no question as to how all this concerns us. Because we are Christians, it is impossible for us to remain unmoved by the miseries of those who are suffering from the evils of intemperance. We cannot escape our responsibility without denying our Christian character. We cannot afford to stand aside and do nothing. Is there not a lesson for us in the war which we are waging? If as a self-respecting people, we cannot permit the rights of small nations to be ignored without some effective protest, still less is it consistent with our Christian faith to allow the weak ones of the world to perish through this monstrous and evil without doing all we can to help them. I sometimes wonder whether that is what we have been doing. The problem of intemperance has been with us all the time, but, as a Church, we have not set ourselves seriously to solve it. We have been unwilling to accept the proposed remedy of prohibitory law, and, therefore, we have done nothing. I am frank to confess that I do not know what positive and practical plan we could have followed, but I am quite sure that we ought to have done something more than pass pious resolutions. That is almost all that the Church, in its corporate capacity, has done.

Is there anything that we can do to-day? I think there is. The question of the entire suppression of the liquor traffic is likely to come before us within the next few months, and it is about that that I want to speak to the Church people of the Province. Rather more than six years ago, I discussed the question briefly in my Charge. Let me remind you of what I said at that time. It was in part as follows: "We shall not agree, perhaps, as to the precise policy that ought to be pursued. For myself, I do not hesitate to say that I do not think that the time is ripe for prohibition, though I believe that to be an ideal towards which we ought to work, and an ideal that will one day be realized. If, therefore, such a measure should be proposed, I should feel compelled to raise my voice against it. *But the moment I can see behind such a measure a weight of public sentiment sufficient to enforce it, I shall be ready to give it my heartiest support.*" That was six years ago. To-day I stand here to tell you that, after watching the growth of public opinion all through the Province for more than six years, I am of opinion that the time has come when a prohibition bill may safely be enacted. I have no illusions about a prohibitory law. I have no expectations that such a law will entirely eliminate the sale of liquor, but I have not the slightest doubt that its enactment under proper safeguards will enormously reduce that sale, and I believe, further, that there is a sufficiently strong sentiment in favour of prohibition to make its passing a sane and salutary thing. Those who are determined to get strong drink will, no doubt,

still be able to do so, if they are not too particular about the methods they employ, or the company they keep. There will still be centres of population in which the law to some extent will be evaded. But the number of those who drink will, in the aggregate, be enormously reduced, and multitudes of men will grow up to whom the taste of liquor is altogether unknown. Make as much as you like of the weaknesses that belong to a prohibitory system, and there will, at least, be these indisputable gains.

As I have already said, I am under no illusions as to prohibition. I am not blind to its inevitable weaknesses. It was because I saw those weaknesses that I was unable to support the prohibition party until I could see also greater compensating gains. I think — nay, I am sure that I can see those gains to-day. No one will contend that a prohibitory system is the loftiest method of dealing with the evils of intemperance. I do not believe that for a moment. It substitutes for voluntary self-denial something that in itself is not so high and noble. It tends to teach men, I know, to lean upon an artificial prop in the battle of the Church with evil. It makes it easy for some men to forget that the real power of the Church is the power of truth taught and principle imparted. Under its influence, earnest-minded men will sometimes fail to see that there are necessary and impassable limits to the moral power of prohibitory law. There is a real danger of that, and we must not shut our eyes to it. Prohibitory law in this direction and the other is often necessary, and when it is necessary, we must not shrink from its enactment, but those who urge it most ought to be the first to feel its entirely superficial and temporary character. It ought always to be regarded as a moral makeshift only, and never as the sufficient remedy for sin. It is a school-master only to bring us to something better. There is always danger of these things being forgotten when the despotism of any prohibitory law displaces in men's lives the principle of voluntary sacrifice — when the power of compulsion makes it needless for men to deny themselves even in some directions only. Men are tempted to forget, as I have said, that the real power of the Church is the power of truth taught and principle imparted. That is something upon which the Church must never cease to insist.

Yet there are evils in the world for whose amendment the power of voluntary self-denial does not suffice. There are sins whose social consequences are so grave that their correction cannot be left entirely to the individual. There are appetites and passions that demand for their suppression something more than merely moral suasion. There are men who are so weak that they can only walk with the assistance of a crutch. These are facts that the world has long since understood. Their recognition, indeed, is woven into the very warp and woof of social life. Call it a weakness if you will. Say that such a recognition substitutes something that is low for something that in itself is very high. It is a substitution that is necessitated by the frailty of our human nature, and it finds its sufficient sanction in the Decalogue itself.

I admit, then, the inevitable weaknesses of prohibition, but

against them I set the certain gain, a gain that in other directions will more than make up for the loss in this. It is impossible to doubt that there will be a clear economic gain. Less money will be wasted in unproductive labour. More men will be working up to their full capacity. There will be more health and happiness. I do not think that these gains will be disputed. But that is not all. Against the weaknesses of prohibition, also, and it is this that concerns us chiefly as a Church, there stands an indisputable moral gain. It removes a terrible stumbling-block from the path of many who are weak.

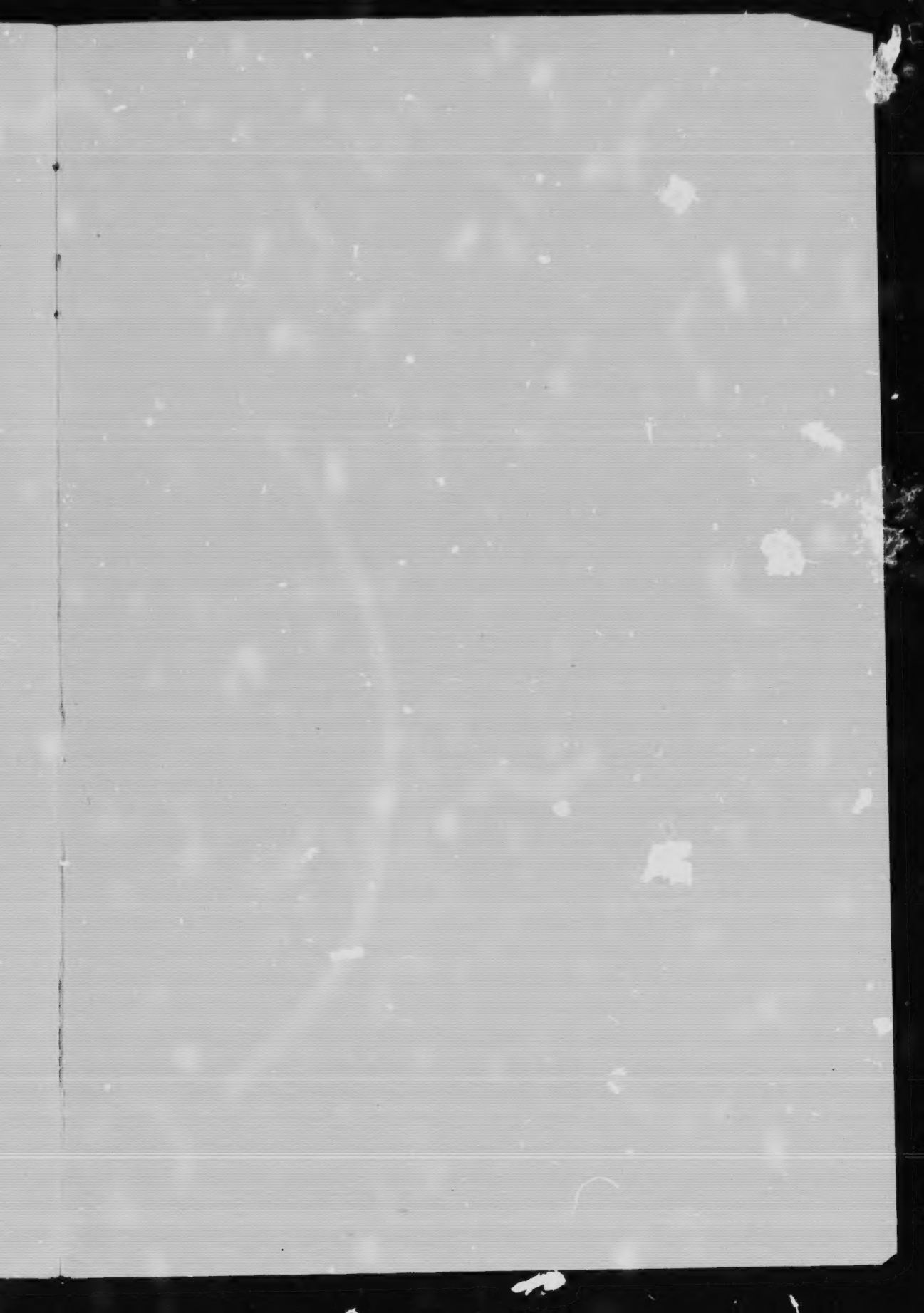
Some of you will hesitate to accept all that I have said upon this subject. I am seeking, you will say, to upset principles that have been long rooted in your life, and to tear down practices that have the sanction of long continued custom in the world. You will tell me, further, that it is impossible to make a people sober by an Act of Parliament. In the strictest sense that is, no doubt true, but it does not thereby follow that an Act of Parliament has no moral value. As a matter of fact, it is probably true to say that an Act of Parliament never makes men moral, but it is none the less an excellent index to the extent to which men are becoming moral, and, like many another index, it has a very distinct monitory value. It is not unlike the thermometer that hangs outside your window. It has no power to make you warm, but it warns you on a cold winter morning to put on your fur coat. It has a monitory value. So much, at least, we may look for from the proposed prohibitory law. If it fails to make the Province altogether sober, and even its most enthusiastic supporters do not look for that, it will, at least, point to the fact that the Province is becoming sober, and, we may well believe, accelerate and make more sure the process.

Let me add one more word. You are members of the Church of England, and you have inherited from your fathers a love of liberty, a love of liberty that leads you to look with suspicion and dislike upon any extension of the prohibitory principle to private life. You are inclined to question the right of the State to infringe upon your freedom in matters about which in the Bible there is no clear command. No one will dispute the value of that love of liberty. No one can read English history, and fail to find there abundant evidence of the part that it has played in the upbuilding and development of our Anglo-Saxon life. It was in the love of liberty that the Empire was conceived. It was the love of liberty that brought it to the birth. It is the love of liberty that has welded the Empire's diverse elements into one great brotherhood. It is the love of liberty that, in every quarter of the globe, is making men of British birth and British blood leap to answer the beating of the Empire's drum. The love of liberty is the hall-mark of our Anglo-Saxon life. Yet suffer one word of earnest warning. Beware lest your love of liberty, your instinctive dislike of the prohibitory principle, should lead you to forget your duty, your plain and imperative duty to make at least some clear contribution to the forces that are fighting this great evil in the world. Take

heed that you sing not your song of liberty to the doleful music of other men's clanking chains. See to it that in your zeal for the law of liberty you forget not the liberty of law. You talk about your rights and privileges. No man has a right to all his rights. No man can claim all his privileges, and continue to call himself a Christian. No man can live to himself alone. The measure of a Christian's freedom is the measure of his brother's need.

But I need say no more. Prohibition is coming. If not now, and I think it will be now, at least some time in the not far-off future. It is coming, not in one Province only, but throughout the whole Dominion. The day is close at hand when from the Atlantic to the Pacific there will be one prohibitory law. No one can doubt that who has watched so all closely the progress of events for the past twenty years. I hope with all my heart that, when that consummation shall have come to pass, it will not be possible to say that the Church of England people had no part in its enactment. I commend to your sympathy and support the principle to which both political parties in the Province have given their adhesion.

Upon a resolution presented by the Standing Committee, the Synod endorsed, by a very large majority, the foregoing statement by the Bishop.



Dr K

Dr S

V. S. A. Baber

